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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 30 August to 17 November 2016

I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the past three months, pursuant to the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended in subsequent resolutions, most recently resolution 2294 (2016).

II. Situation in the area of operation and activities of the Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was maintained, albeit in a volatile environment attributable to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and notwithstanding a significant number of violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (Disengagement of Forces Agreement) of 1974, which are set out below. The Syrian Arab Armed Forces and non-State armed opposition groups engaged in exchanges of heavy weapon fire in the area of separation and the area of limitation. Different armed groups, including the listed terrorist group the Nusrah Front[1] and the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, which pledged allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, continued to exchange fire in the UNDOF area of operation. Inside the area of separation, the presence of the Syrian armed forces and military equipment, as well as any other armed personnel and military equipment other than that of UNDOF, is in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. As underscored again by the Security Council in its resolution 2294 (2016), there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed in the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line. All incidents of firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing of the ceasefire line by individuals, are violations of the Disengagement of Forces

[1] In July 2016, the Nusrah Front announced that it had changed its name to Jabhat Fath al-Sham and declared that it had cut ties with Al-Qaida.

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Agreement. In his regular interaction with both sides, the Force Commander continued to call upon both parties to exercise restraint and prevent any miscalculations that might lead to an escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. This was applicable in particular following incidents of spillover and retaliatory fire.

4. Incidents of spillover and retaliatory fire across the ceasefire line increased significantly, particularly in the early stages of the reporting period. UNDOF assessed that the incidents of spillover fire originating from the Bravo side were not an attempt to target the Alpha side, the Israel Defense Forces or UNDOF personnel, but rather a result of ongoing clashes between the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the area. In some cases, non-State armed opposition groups in the area of separation were responsible for spillover incidents.

5. During the month of September, there were six confirmed incidents of spillover fire from the Bravo side to the Alpha side. On 4 September, one high explosive round impacted west of the ceasefire line, causing damage at a road junction. The Syrian armed forces acknowledged responsibility for the incident. On 7 September, one high explosive tank round impacted west of the ceasefire line but failed to detonate. On 10 September, one high explosive tank round impacted between the towns of Mas'ada and Majdal Shams on the Alpha side; no damage was recorded. On 12 September, one high explosive round impacted west of the ceasefire line, again with no damage caused. The Israel Defense Forces confirmed that Israeli aircraft conducting activity in Syrian airspace in response to the spillover incident were engaged by two Syrian air defence missiles. On 13 September, two confirmed high explosive tank rounds impacted west of the ceasefire line. On all of those occasions, joint investigations were conducted by UNDOF and Observer Group Golan. The impacts and calibre of the ammunition were confirmed in each case. However, it was not possible to confirm the points of origin of the fire.

6. On 13 September, the Israel Defense Forces initially reported an impact in the vicinity of Majdal Shams but did not subsequently confirm it. On 14 September, the Israel Defense Forces reported one high explosive impact west of the ceasefire line. The location was later confirmed to be situated in a minefield, and an investigation by UNDOF and Observer Group Golan personnel was not possible. On 17 September, the Israel Defense Forces fired two rockets towards Qunaytirah, in the area of separation. The Israel Defense Forces subsequently reported that the rockets had been fired in order to intercept spillover fire from the area of separation. UNDOF is unable to confirm the spillover fire in that incident.

7. After the above-mentioned incidents, the incidence of spillover fire decreased significantly until 17 October, when heavy machine gun fire from the vicinity of vacated United Nations observation post 71 impacted west of the ceasefire line but east of the Israeli technical fence. On 29 and 31 October, heavy ammunition was again observed to have been fired from vacated observation post 71, impacting west of the ceasefire line but east of the Israeli technical fence. United Nations personnel did not conduct further investigations because the impacts were observed, there was no high explosive crater to be examined and the location of the impacts was east of the technical fence.

8. On 9 November, there was a further incident of spillover fire west of the ceasefire line when one high explosive tank round impacted but failed to detonate. This was confirmed by UNDOF after investigation. Similar to previous spillover incidents, the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate stated that the Syrian armed forces were not responsible. The Israel Defense Forces, similar to previous incidents, claimed that they had carried out "defensive action" against a Syrian armed forces position. When asked by UNDOF, the Israel Defense Forces stated that they could not determine the point of origin. The stated policy of the Israel Defense Forces is that defensive or retaliatory fire is always directed at installations, equipment and personnel of the Syrian armed forces, usually from the Israeli Air Force or unmanned aerial vehicles. This is despite the insistence by the Syrian authorities that they are not responsible for the original fire.

9. The construction of a berm, or earthwork, in the area of separation continued throughout the reporting period. The berm is over two kilometres long and appears to be facilitating movement in the corridor between Hamidiyah al-Jadidah and Jubbata al-Khashab. The berm is used by armed groups, thus making it a target for the Syrian armed forces. This has the effect of drawing fire, particularly indirect fire, closer to the ceasefire line and the technical fence. The berm crosses the ceasefire line in at least one location. The location of the berm and its proximity to the ceasefire line and the technical fence is assessed to be a contributing factor to the increase in incidents of spillover fire. The berm continues to be a major cause of concern for UNDOF.

10. Crossing of the ceasefire line by civilians, primarily shepherds, from the Bravo side to the Alpha side continues to be observed almost daily. Observed instances of interaction between Israel Defense Forces soldiers and individuals from the Bravo side have decreased significantly from the previous reporting period. On 4 September, UNDOF observed one white truck being driven from Mu'allaqah, located in the area of limitation 500 metres east of the Bravo line, in the direction of United Nations observation post 54, crossing the ceasefire line and moving towards the technical fence gate, which was opened and subsequently closed. Around 10 minutes later, the vehicle was observed leaving through the technical fence with two armed personnel on board, using the same route back towards Mu'allaqah. On 13 September, UNDOF observed a vehicle with two individuals on board crossing the ceasefire line in the vicinity of observation post 54. The vehicle was driven towards the technical fence, where one of the individuals exited the vehicle and walked through the technical fence gate, which was open. The vehicle immediately turned around and departed, crossing the ceasefire line into the area of separation.

11. In the context of the ongoing Syrian conflict, there was a significant spike in military activity in the northern part of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side on 10 and 11 September. An offensive was launched on 10 September, in which open sources reported that a number of armed groups took part, including Ahrar al-Sham and the Nusrah Front, taking advantage of the berm constructed in the area of separation. The assessed aim of the offensive was to link areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups around Bayt Jinn. The initial main effort appears to have been the area around Tall Hamariyah, also known as the "Castle". UNDOF assessed that it was captured by armed groups on 10 September and is still being contested. Further spikes in activity in the area occurred on 9 and 15 November, suggesting that fluctuations in the intensity of the fighting continue.

12. The Mount Hermon complex remained stable throughout the reporting period. There were daily incidents of transborder movements of unidentified armed and unarmed personnel. UNDOF reported several incidents of sporadic small arms fire throughout the period. On 29 October, four small-calibre mortar rounds were fired from the vicinity of a Syrian armed forces position, but the point of impact was not observed. UNDOF did not observe any incidents of interaction between the Israel Defense Forces and unidentified armed elements in the Mount Hermon area during the reporting period.

13. In the central parts of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side, clashes continued between armed groups and the Syrian armed forces, with consistent reports of direct and indirect firing. Prior to the offensive launched on 10 September (see para. 11 above), a coalition of 13 armed groups announced an offensive in July 2016 across the Khan Arnabah salient. Prior to 10 September, there had been reports of direct and indirect firing predominantly in the vicinity of Ba'th towards Hamidiyah al-Jadidah. Firing was also observed along the front lines in the vicinity of Syrian armed forces positions towards positions held by armed groups in south Gharbiyah, Qunaytirah and the contested area of Samdaniyah — all located in the area of separation — as well as in Umm Batinah, located in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

14. During the reporting period, a number of incidents of firing in the central part of the area of separation put United Nations positions and personnel at risk. On four occasions, on 17 and 24 September, on 14 October and on 10 November, United Nations personnel at position 22 were forced to go into shelter as a result of high explosive impacts in the vicinity of the position. United Nations personnel at observation post 51 were forced to go into shelter on 10 September as a result of firing in the vicinity of the position.

15. There were also frequent reports of movement of armed groups and observation of their equipment in the area of separation. A T-55 main battle tank, a technical vehicle mounted with an anti-aircraft weapon, D-30 towed artillery pieces and 2S1 tracked artillery pieces were regularly reported in the areas of Hamidiyah al-Jadidah, Qunaytirah and Qahtaniyah.

16. In the southern parts of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side, which remain for the most part under the control of non-State armed groups, clashes continued between the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade and the Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, on the one side, and the Free Syrian Army and the Nusrah Front, on the other. Significant spikes in military activity were observed between 7 and 9 October and between 28 and 30 October in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

17. UNDOF protested all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement to both parties, including the presence of unauthorized equipment in the area of separation and firing into the area of separation. The Force Commander reminded the parties of their obligation to abide by the terms of the Agreement and to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground.

18. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed persons on the Bravo side unearthing and removing mines in close proximity to United Nations positions on five occasions. On 5, 6 and 8 September, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed persons, assessed to be shepherds, removing approximately 50

anti-personnel mines from the ground. In all instances, the individuals opened the anti-personnel mine, discarded or emptied the explosive content on the ground and carried away the metal casings.

19. On 18 September, four persons were observed from observation post 53 excavating mines approximately 300 metres west of the ceasefire line. The mines were placed in a plastic bag, then the persons departed the scene towards Ayshah, in the area of separation, on two motorcycles. On 25 September, two shepherds were observed from observation post 54 crossing the ceasefire line with their flock and spending approximately two hours digging and excavating mines. It is assessed that in that period, 12 anti-personnel mines were collected and taken away.

20. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed six locations where 344 tents and other structures had been set up for internally displaced persons in the area of separation and in proximity to that area. The number of people in the camps could not be ascertained and appeared to fluctuate. A new location to the south-west of vacated United Nations position 37, consisting of 20 tents, was first observed on 27 September. The camp east of Burayqah village in the central part of the area of separation increased from 200 to almost 230 tents, huts and containers of various sizes. Owing to the closure of the established crossing point at Qunaytirah between the Alpha and Bravo sides since late August 2014, UNDOF remains unable to facilitate, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, humanitarian crossings, including for students, between the two sides.

21. Since its temporary relocation from a number of positions in September 2014 and pending its full return to the area of separation, UNDOF has continued to maintain visibility of the area of separation and the ceasefire line from its positions on Mount Hermon, position 80 in the southern part of the area of separation and position 22 on the Alpha side. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) military observers in Observer Group Golan, who are under the operational control of UNDOF and maintained five fixed and four temporary observation posts along the Alpha line. The focus of the activities of Observer Group Golan was on continuous static observation and situational awareness. On 10 October, Observer Group Golan-Damascus resumed operations with the manning of four temporary observation posts on Mount Hermon. This has enhanced observation of the northern part of the areas of separation and limitation. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied the inspection teams. Inspections in the area of limitation on the Bravo side remained suspended because of the security situation. As in the past, UNDOF has faced restrictions on its freedom of movement, and its inspection teams were denied access to some positions on the Alpha side. Engagement between UNDOF and the Israel Defense Forces helped to reduce the delays and challenges experienced by United Nations personnel in crossing through the technical fence to United Nations observation posts 54 and 73 and position 80.

22. During the reporting period, United Nations personnel repeatedly observed 155 mm artillery weapons on the Alpha side within 10 kilometres of the ceasefire line. On three occasions in October, an armoured vehicle was observed at a position within 10 kilometres of the ceasefire line. On 13, 17 and 24 October, UNDOF

personnel observed a multiple-rocket launching system at an Israel Defense Forces position within the 20 kilometre zone in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. In addition, throughout the reporting period, an Iron Dome system was observed at an Israel Defense Forces position in the area of limitation on the Alpha side.

23. UNDOF, in consultation with both parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation to assess whether the conditions on the ground permitted an incremental return to vacated positions in the area of separation, commencing with a limited return to Camp Faouar. In this regard, the UNDOF Force Reserve Company conducted a reconnaissance mission to the Bravo side from 8 to 15 September, visiting the Mount Hermon complex, Camp Faouar, Harfa and vacated United Nations position 25 in Khan Arnabah. UNDOF personnel carried out further fact-finding missions, on 13 and 15 September and on 3 October, to Mount Hermon and Camp Faouar.

24. During the reporting period, UNDOF completed its planned limited return to Camp Faouar. Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic reiterated their commitment to the return of UNDOF to Camp Faouar and vacated positions in the area of separation, when conditions permitted, and took the necessary preparatory actions that made the return of UNDOF to Camp Faouar possible.

25. In accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 2294 (2016), and in addition to detailed planning conducted jointly by UNDOF and the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support of the Secretariat, as well as regular security assessments carried out over the past several weeks, demining and the restoration of water, electricity, heating and communications were completed at Camp Faouar by 14 November. In addition, a crossing point, to be used in extremis, has been prepared in the vicinity of observation post 73, and temporary procedures have been established.

26. On 14 November, UNDOF deployed an initial presence at Camp Faouar, establishing a Camp Faouar component consisting of the following capabilities and functions: (a) a contingent from Fiji (80 personnel) that will implement the camp security procedures and establish internal and external communications; (b) an armoured personnel carrier platoon from Nepal (22 personnel) acting as a quick reaction force/reserve, together with five armoured personnel carriers fitted with 12.7 mm heavy machine guns; and (c) an engineering platoon from Nepal (25 personnel) tasked with engineering and refurbishing work. A logistics contingent of 23 troops from India joined the Camp Faouar component on 22 November to support the refurbishment works. After the winter, the Nepalese armoured personnel carriers will move to strengthen the Mount Hermon complex, and a newly generated mechanized infantry company is planned to be deployed to Camp Faouar by that time, which would give UNDOF the capacity to commence surveillance patrols around and beyond Camp Faouar, conditions permitting. The continued support of the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement will be crucial for the safety and security of UNDOF personnel at Camp Faouar and to maintain the confidence of the troop-contributing countries that have agreed to lead the first phase of the limited return of UNDOF to Camp Faouar.

27. The situation in the UNDOF area of operations on the Bravo side remains volatile, including in the environs of Camp Faouar and along the resupply route to Damascus. Although the continued fighting between the Syrian armed forces and

armed groups appears to present no direct threat to Camp Faouar, UNDOF remains cognizant of the changes in the dynamics of the threat that the return may stimulate and will closely monitor all activity in the area of operations and maintain associated levels of readiness within the Force. The safety and security of UNDOF personnel is of paramount importance, and to that end a threat assessment is maintained for Camp Faouar, the surrounding areas and the primary and alternative routes for convoys, as well as extraction routes. UNDOF headquarters will ensure that the threat and risk assessments are continuously updated and incorporated into the decision-making process concerning the Camp Faouar component. Contingency plans are in place, including in extremis.

28. While the mission works to maintain and consolidate a secure presence at Camp Faouar, the Secretariat, together with UNDOF, will continue efforts to plan for the return of UNDOF to vacated positions in the area of separation, including the provision of adequate force protection, on the basis of a continuous assessment of security in the area.

29. UNDOF continued to resupply its positions on Mount Hermon from Damascus. UNDOF convoys between Damascus and the Mount Hermon positions were conducted almost daily and with an UNDOF security escort, accompanied by a liaison officer from the office of the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate. UNDOF continued to carry out contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts and to update its contingency planning for the relocation and evacuation of United Nations personnel on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, as well as in Damascus. UNDOF, through its Force Reserve Company, conducted regular rehearsals, exercises and training for all identified contingencies. UNDOF and Observer Group Golan continued regular evacuation and reinforcement exercises and contingency planning.

30. The implementation of risk mitigation, including force protection measures recommended in the military capability study of UNDOF, continued at observation posts, positions and the operational base at Camp Ziouani. The additional medical facilities and explosive ordnance disposal teams for Mount Hermon positions and position 80 have been deployed, and protected mobility has been provided for the Mount Hermon component. Additional force protection measures, including defensive positions and newly constructed force protection barriers, have been completed at United Nations positions 12A and 22. The infrastructure works and groundworks at positions 12 and 12A and enhancements at United Nations position 80, including additional force protection measures, were also completed.

31. As at 10 November 2016, UNDOF comprised 832 troops, including 30 women. Troops are currently deployed from Bhutan (2), Czechia (3), Fiji (301), Finland (2), India (195), Ireland (136), Nepal (191) and the Netherlands (2). In addition, 77 military observers from UNTSO, including 8 female observers, assisted the Force in carrying out its tasks.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

32. In its resolution 2294 (2016), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973), decided to renew the

mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, until 31 December 2016, and requested the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement resolution 338 (1973). The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was addressed in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/71/328), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 70/16 on Jerusalem and 70/17 on the Syrian Golan.

33. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. The Syrian conflict is further reducing the prospects for their resumption and for progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

IV. Financial aspects

34. The General Assembly, by its resolution 70/279, appropriated the amount of $47.7 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. As at 15 November 2016, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNDOF amounted to $11.7 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $1,572.8 million.

35. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 July 2016, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 30 June 2016, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

V. Observations

36. I am pleased that UNDOF forces have redeployed to Camp Faouar, and that the United Nations flag flies in Camp Faouar once again. This is a significant milestone for UNDOF, including in the fulfilment of resolution 2294 (2016), and represents the first phase of the incremental return of UNDOF forces to the positions and observation posts in the area of separation and the area of limitation vacated in 2014, conditions permitting.

37. I acknowledge the support and actions of both parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that have made this crucial step possible, including their acceptance to establish a crossing point, to be used in extremis, in the vicinity of observation post 73, and temporary procedures in the absence of the crossing at Qunaytirah. Given that the security situation in the northern part of the area of separation and around Camp Faouar remains volatile, the continued support of the parties will be crucial for the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and to maintain the confidence of troop-contributing countries. I am pleased to report that the parties have reiterated to the UNDOF Force Commander and the Secretariat in New York their commitment to do everything in their power to assist UNDOF in this respect.

38. As UNDOF consolidates its presence at Camp Faouar and continues its efforts to intensify its operations in the area of separation, it remains critical that the safety and security of United Nations personnel be assured. The circumstances under which the troops and military observers are operating remain complex and challenging and require continued vigilance and risk mitigation measures. I renew my call on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to fulfil its primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. I also renew my call on countries with influence to strongly and urgently convey to the non-State armed opposition groups in the UNDOF area of operation the need to cease any actions in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to accord United Nations personnel the freedom to carry out their clear and important mandate safely and securely. The safety and security of United Nations personnel must be ensured.

39. I note with concern the serious violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that have occurred, including incidents of spillover and retaliatory fire across the ceasefire line. The continued fighting on the Bravo side between the Syrian armed forces and armed groups, and between different armed groups, including the listed terrorist group the Nusrah Front, in the southern part of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side, as well as the firing of missiles by the Israel Defense Forces across the ceasefire line, jeopardize the long-term ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. It remains critical that the parties maintain a liaison with UNDOF in the first instance to prevent any escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. For its part, the United Nations will maintain its efforts to ensure that the long-held ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic continues to hold.

40. I remain gravely concerned by the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, its impact on the Syrian population and its potential implications for the stability of the region. These developments have continued to significantly affect the UNDOF area of operation. The presence of the Syrian armed forces and unauthorized military equipment in the area of separation are violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The increased use of heavy weapons by the Syrian armed forces and armed groups, including listed terrorist groups, in the continuing Syrian conflict is disturbing. I note that while the reduction in the levels of firing continues in the northern part of the UNDOF area of operation, listed terrorist groups and other armed groups continue to maintain control over significant sections of the areas of separation and limitation in the UNDOF area of operation. The established crossing between the Alpha and Bravo sides remains closed.

41. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. I call upon all parties to the Syrian conflict to cease military actions throughout the country, including in the UNDOF area of operation, and to remove all military equipment and all armed personnel from the area of separation.

42. The Israel Defense Forces should refrain from firing across the ceasefire line. The firing of missiles across the ceasefire line by Israel Defense Forces soldiers has the potential to escalate tensions between the two sides. The continued presence of

unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on the Alpha side is also of concern.

43. I remain concerned about the several incidents that have put United Nations personnel and facilities at risk. Any hostile act against United Nations personnel, including threatening their physical safety, restricting their movement and direct and indirect firing at United Nations personnel and facilities by anyone, is unacceptable. I reiterate that all military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor pose a risk to the ceasefire and to the local civilian population, in addition to the United Nations personnel on the ground. I call upon all parties to take all measures necessary to protect civilians.

44. The continued presence of UNDOF in the area remains essential. Both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic have stated their continued commitment to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and support for the presence of UNDOF in calling for a return to vacated positions in the area of separation. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation remains a priority for the mission. I count on the continued cooperation of both parties with UNDOF in order for the mission to advance its planning. As a matter of priority, the technology and equipment necessary to enhance the UNDOF observation of the area of separation and the ceasefire line and to improve force protection remains critical. It also remains critical that, at the same time, the parties continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

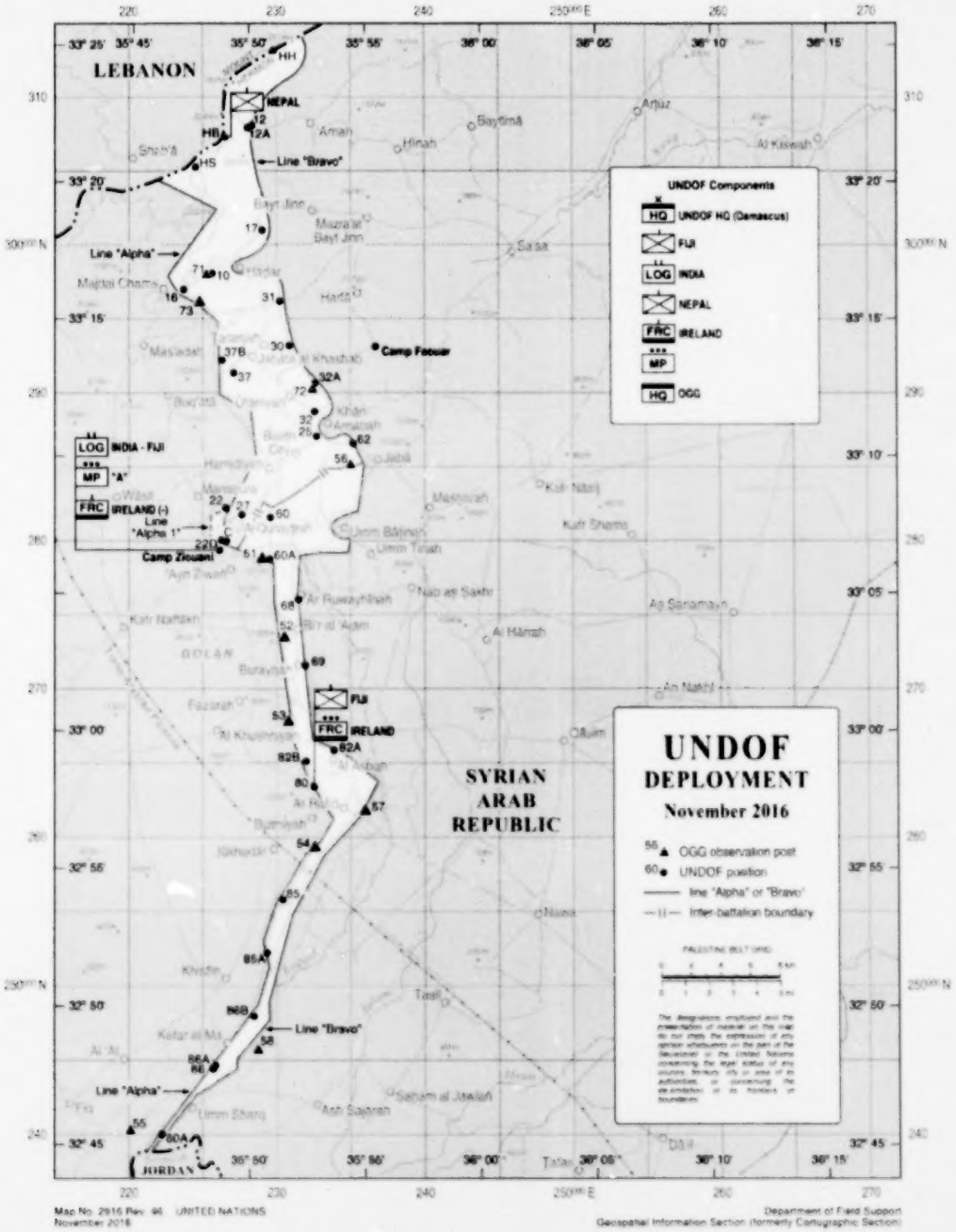
45. It is equally important that the Security Council continue to bring to bear its influence on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate in a safe and secure manner and freely. It is essential that UNDOF continue to have at its disposal all means and resources necessary for it to return fully to the area of separation, conditions permitting.

46. The confidence and commitment of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF remains a key factor for the mission's ability to carry out its mandate. I continue to count on the support of troop-contributing countries as UNDOF proceeds with its planning, including in relation to the augmentation of required capabilities, in preparation for the envisaged increased operations in the area of separation. I am grateful to the Governments of Bhutan, Czechia, Fiji, Finland, India, Ireland, Nepal and the Netherlands for their contributions, their commitment and their resolve. I am also thankful to the Member States contributing military observers to UNTSO.

47. I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential, and all the more so under the prevailing circumstances. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a further period of six months, until 30 June 2017. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel has also expressed its agreement.

48. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Jai Shanker Menon, and the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership, who continue to perform the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council with efficiency and commitment under challenging circumstances. I have full confidence that UNDOF will continue to use its best efforts to carry out its mission.

Annex


LEBANON
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Camp Faouar
Camp Ziouani
UNDOF Components
HQ UNDOF HQ (Damascus)
FIJI
LOG INDIA
NEPAL
FRC IRELAND
MP
HQ OGG
LOG INDIA - FIJI
MP "A"
FRC IRELAND (-)
Line "Alpha 1"
UNDOF
DEPLOYMENT
November 2016
OGG observation post
UNDOF position
line "Alpha" or "Bravo"
Inter-battalion boundary
Map No. 2916 Rev. 96 UNITED NATIONS
November 2016
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Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)